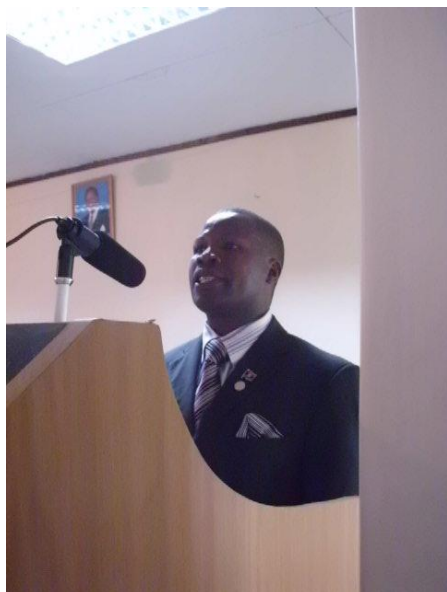
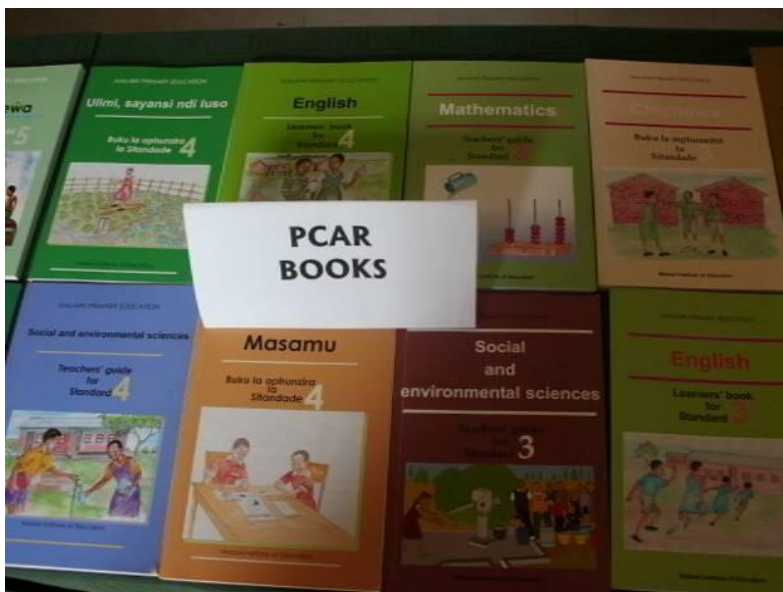


Malawi Teacher Professional Development Support Monthly Bulletin APRIL 2011 ABE/LINK

Deputy Minister launches the long-awaited revision of lower primary instruction materials at MIE



Hon. Sajeni officially opens the workshop



A display of some of the instructional materials to be revised

1

Quality teaching requires the presence of quality instructional materials. For a long time the MoEST has recognized the need to review and revise the existing lower primary textbooks and teachers' guides. This revision process is now well underway. A writers workshop was conducted from 4th to 21st April at Malawi Institute of Education (MIE) at Domasi to review and revise materials for standard 1.

The importance that the MoEST attaches to the exercise was demonstrated on the opening day, when the event was officially opened by the Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology Honourable Wictor Songazaudzu Sajeni. He emphasised that low levels of literacy in lower primary as demonstrated by SACMEQ and other surveys are of particular concern to the MoEST as they undermine the future economic development of the country as a whole. In his opening remarks, he emphasised that the workshop and the materials it will generate are critical in improving the quality of education in Malawi. He stated MoEST's commitment to a target of one textbook per learner in each subject.

Speaking at the same function, the Director for MIE Dr. William Susuwele-Banda said the revision of the textbooks was built upon a firm foundation of MTPDS-funded field research involving 480 practicing teachers nationwide. MTPDS will also fund the refining and typesetting of the materials. He informed the gathering that the process would continue chronologically up to STD 8 until all instructional materials are revised. He thanked USAID / MTPDS and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for joining hands with MIE to fund the revision of STDs 1 to 4 materials.

MTPDS Monthly Bulletin Summary

Writing panels were convened for each of the 7 standard 1 learning areas. These panels were mainly composed of representatives from MIE, MoEST and various Teacher Training Colleges. Each writing panel also contained a serving teacher to ensure that the results conformed realistically their needs and expectations. The panels worked from April 4th to 24th, by which time complete first drafts for both learners' books and teachers' were complete for each of the 7 subjects in standard 1. MTPDS provided technical assistance to the process through international textbook consultant Dr. Lynn Evans from the University of Louisiana State University and Primary Curriculum Specialist Rosemary Ngalande. MTPDS will continue to support the process as it moves on now to focus on standard 2 textbooks and teachers' guides.

Numeracy CPD delivered nationwide



Numeracy modules



Training of Facilitators at Msalura TDC in Salima

2

April was a busy month for the MTPDS CPD team and their MoEST counterparts. Activity focused on the roll out of the 1st Numeracy Module. This training is focusing on those topics which needs-assessments show that teachers find most problematic including:

- Making teaching number concepts enjoyable
- Additional with regrouping
- Making teaching and learning of 4 digit numbers enjoyable
- Subtraction with regrouping

The modules contain practical guidance on how to teach difficult topics in an engaging and activity-based way. 32,000 modules and 1,300 facilitators' guides were printed and distributed all over Malawi by in readiness for the divisional and cluster trainings. MTPDS thanks the Education Division Offices for assisting with transportation.

Training of a national cadre of 31 master trainers took place at Liwonde at the end of March. Then the training of 940 Key Teachers and Primary Education Advisor (PEAs) took place in selected centers in each of the 6 Education Divisions from 6th to 9th April. Finally cluster training of a target group of 32,000 standard 1-4 teachers in all 34 districts commenced on 22nd April. This training will be ongoing at cluster level on weekends through May according to a timetable determined by each individual district.

During the forthcoming school term the focus of CPD activity will be on preparation for the delivery of the 2nd leadership module and the 1st Life Skills module, both of which are scheduled for June.

MTPDS Monthly Bulletin Summary

Some challenges were experienced in the timely transfer of funds to districts which delayed the start of training. Delays in completing the reconciliation of funds previously received for literacy and leadership training has also delayed the initiation of training in 6 districts. Education staff at district level is politely reminded of the importance of timely financial reporting and reconciliation.

Literacy intervention for Ntchisi and Salima takes off

Elube Mkweza is a standard 1 teacher at Kambwiri Primary School in Salima and like many other teachers across the country, she struggles under difficult teaching conditions to teach her children to read and write. For this reason she was excited to be involved in the piloting of literacy teaching materials in the MTPDS literacy intervention in Salima and Ntchisi.

Mrs. Mkweza is assisting the MTPDS District Literacy & Numeracy Coordinators (DLNCs) to develop a series of hour-long lesson-plans for the use of standard 1 teachers which are easy-to-use and which directly address the gaps in learners' skills and knowledge that have been revealed in the national Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) baseline study (soon to be released) including:

- letter naming fluency,
- syllable fluency,
- phonemic awareness,
- word reading fluency,
- oral reading fluency,
- reading comprehension, and
- listening comprehension.

3

The emphasis of the lessons is on developing the decoding skills of learners and the teaching methods employed are simple and engaging but do not make any assumptions about the availability of resources apart from a chalkboard. Learners respond with enthusiasm to innovative methodologies such as the use of hand signals when replying to questions. The intervention blends best practices in previous projects in Malawi with international best practice in literacy - notably from USAID's recent ground-breaking work in Liberia.



STD 1 teachers at Kambwiri and Chimweta Primary Schools in Salima district during a Chichewa lesson.

MTPDS Monthly Bulletin Summary

Mrs. Mkweza praised the intervention, saying that her learners are already able to read and write Chichewa better than was previously the case a year ago. She gave an example of one of her learners who is dumb and has a hearing impairment. She said the boy is now able to write by following the teacher's instruction through lip-reading. However she is also adding value to development of the lessons by providing professional feedback to MTPDS on the content and pacing of lessons.

The first training course of the intervention for over 1,000 standard 1-4 teachers in Salima and Ntchisi took place from April 11th-18th and was delivered by PEAs working in collaboration with MTPDS staff. The final number trained has yet to be reconciled but attendance was uniformly reported to be good. The literacy intervention in Salima and Ntchisi is piloting methods which MTPDS will subsequently roll out nationally through the mainstream CPD effort.

MTPDS pilots use of MP3 players by ODL students

MTPDS is searching for innovative ways to apply information technology to support learning by Initial Primary Teacher Education Open and Distance Learning students. During the week starting 18th April MTPDS was visited by Matthew Finholt who is an IT consultant from Seward Inc tasked with initiating a pilot study investigating the performance and applicability of MP3 players as a means of delivering learning content to students.



A total of 26 teacher learners (12 male and 14 female) from Lilongwe TTC and St. Joseph's TTC in Dedza were selected to participate in the pilot. All of these learners come from Kamwendo, Waliranji and Ludzi zones in Mchinji District. The ODL Desk officer for St. Joseph's TTC and her deputy and Desk Officer for Lilongwe TTC participated as anchors for this pilot.

Each teacher learner was issued with an MP3 player which can be charged in a similar manner to a mobile phone and has a similar battery life. Each learner was also provided with thorough training by the Consultant and MTPDS Divisional Team Leader in how to use the device to access learning material, play instructional videos, take photographs, record sound, and use as a radio to access interactive instruction.

Use of the MP3 player opens up new possibilities for learner assignments. Some exercises loaded onto this MP3 player ask learners to record their experiences in the form of sound recording or picture diaries. The success of the pilot will be evaluated later this year to evaluate the cost effectiveness of up-scaling the intervention.

The Deputy Principal of St. Joseph's TTC, lamented that, he wished if this pilot was for the whole college considering that this gadget was actually 'a tutor in teacher-learners' pocket'.